Homely Homilies.

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OR,

BARNABAS BLUNT'S PLAIN TALK FOR PLAIN FOLK.

BY THE

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PREFACE.

THE pseudonym under which the following papers are written, and the form in which they are cast, will indicate the intention of the writer.

The hope is cherished that, by the adoption of a plain and familiar style, the lessons conveyed in these "Homely Homilies" may arrest the attention and reach the hearts of some who would not care to read a homily of the ordinary kind.

If this hope be realized, the author's end will be answered, and his labour abundantly rewarded.

August, 1874.

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HOMELY HOMILIES.

I.

ON SPEAKING ONE'S MIND.

I AM a plain man both in manners and speech,—"Blunt by name and blunt by nature," some of my neighbours say; but, withal, I trust I am kind if sometimes curt, and charitable though candid. I don't believe in the bluntness that some people so much boast of,—"always speaking their mind," as they say, whether they please or offend.

These folks would use a skewer instead of a needle to pierce a pimple, and dash a bucket of water over you to recover you from fainting, and then say it was all for your good. They have no thought for other

people's feelings, they tread on your toes, rub against you with all their prickles outwards, and then say it's no use for you to talk about your corns or to complain if you are pierced,—they "always did and they always shall speak their minds." Their minds being very shallow and soon on the boil, it is no wonder that they so often and so quickly foam and bubble over. I notice, too, that they who are readiest to speak their mind, have least mind to speak of. And as shallow vessels soonest run over, they themselves are the least able to receive plain speaking from other people.

There was neighbour Outwithit, the other day, nearly sent poor Miss Tabitha Timid into hysterics by saying, "Old maids are always cross and cantankerous, and care more for cats than for Christians." And when some one said he should not have so spoken before one of the class, he replied, "He always spoke his mind, and he believed in being out-spoken." He was reminded that Miss Tabitha was the very opposite of what he had described her order to be,—but these speak-your-mind folks can never be convinced that they have said the wrong thing, or *a right thing* at the wrong time. They have

no respect of persons, or of *parsons* either, for that matter. In fact, they seem rather to delight in lecturing those who are wiser than themselves.

Roger Rasp is a sore thorn in the side of his minister. He has set himself up as a critic of sermons and a censor of ministerial conduct in general.

I heard him say to the parson one Sunday morning, directly he came from the pulpit, where he had been pouring out his soul in enforcing Paul's "I beseech you, therefore, brethren,"—and had been a minute or two longer than usual in setting forth the "reasonable service,"—*You've been preaching about a reasonable service and giving us an unreasonable service.* That was encouraging for a man who had been trying to get other people's hearts into the same fervour as his own!

And yet, a few weeks later, when the minister had been preaching on the "whole armour of God," and had closed rather abruptly because he knew what would be the matter if he passed the exact minute at which he was expected to loose the people from spiritual pastures that they might fill their bellies at home, Brother Rasp, who attempts a little preaching himself, blurted

out, "Ah, you left out the best part of the subject,—*praying always!* *I* always lay stress on that, when *I* preach from that text."

Our good pastor, who is very quiet, said nothing, but I saw that he winced.

How much better is a warm "Thank you, sir, you've done me good this morning," than a grunt and a grumble. Some animals grunt whether they have little or much, and are never satisfied. And some folks complain of what a man doesn't say, as well as of what he does say.

Roger got a little reproof once, though, but he soon got over it. He was chattering and pottering about in the vestry one day, much to the annoyance of its occupant, who didn't want his mind disturbed by croakings and captions; when the parson looked up and said quietly,—"*Is* there a minister's vestry on these premises?" That was as good as notice to quit, and I think Roger understood it.

Candour and captiousness are two different things, as different as the honey and the sting. I like faithful people, but I don't like find-faults. What is the good of pinching a child's nose, and pouring medicine *down* its throat holus-bolus, when the little

one would take it pleasantly enough with a little milk and sugar? You needn't take a sledge-hammer to drive a tin-tack with, and a pair of tweezers will get a splinter out easier than pincers. If it becomes a duty to speak plainly, there's a time and place and a way to do it with the best chance of getting success. If you try to break stones with your fist, you will break your knuckles; if you won't choose the time for sowing, don't expect your seed to grow. Reproof is kind, when needed, and tenderly given; but not when it is so given as to degrade the receiver before many witnesses.

My Sunday-school teacher spoke his mind to me kindly one day. Taking me round a corner, he put his hand on my shoulder and, looking into my eyes with his own all a-brimming, told me of my besetting fault. And I have never forgotten it; the remembrance of the faithful reproof, and respect for the friend who gave it have lived in my heart ever since.

One of my companions in the next class was often reproved by his teacher, who spoke his mind and said—"You'll never come to any good." So the boy believed it, and, seeing that his teacher expected it, and told everybody else to look for the result he predicted,

he threw off all restraint and lived to justify the unkind prophecy. Well, I mustn't go on speaking my mind at this rate, or I shall become wearisome. So with a verse that my dear old grandmother was very fond of, and taught me when I was a tiny boy, I'll close this rambling talk.

"Speak gently! it is better far
To rule by love than fear;
Speak gently, let not harsh words mar
The good we might do here.

"Speak gently to the little child,
Its love be sure to gain;
Teach it in accents soft and mild,
Your teachings shall remain.

"Speak gently to the young, for they
Will have enough to bear,
Pass through this life as best they may
'Tis full of anxious care.

"Speak gently to the aged one,
Grieve not the care-worn heart;
The sands of life are nearly run,
Let such in peace depart."

II.

ON EVERY DAY RELIGION.

IT is a good thing for a man to have a Sunday coat, but a bad thing for him to have a Sunday religion. The piety that is laid aside with the man's Sabbath garb is no true piety at all. That is a false view of religion which regards it as something apart from or added to the life. Religion *is* the life, and not an external adornment of it, to be worn or thrown aside as convenience dictates. I have heard it said that "Religion is that which binds the heart of man to God;" then surely one is not religious who puts restraint on himself for one day out of seven, but runs at random all the other six. Some flowers cannot live out of the hothouse, and some people seem to think religion should never be brought out of the sanctuary; and when their Bibles and hymn-books are closed and left in the pew, have an idea that their religion may

be left there till wanted again the next Sunday. So *their* religion may, for they are sure never to miss it. The life of a man who possesses real piety is changed by it, ruled by it, and filled with it. If a man be not the better for his religion, he either has none, or else deceives himself with a bad substitute. When a man is truly converted to God, it will be known without his "making profession" of it. When a candle is lit it must shine; all you have to do is not to put it under a bushel, but simply let it have a chance and it will shine. Every creature in the house, down to the youngest child or the cat by the fireside, will be blessed by the head of the house being a true Christian. Real religion makes a man a better father in his family, a better master or a better servant in the world of business. The ploughman or the stable-boy who loves God will be worth more to his master than he who is no Christian.

There is plenty of "Sunday-go-to-meeting" religion in the world, we want a little more of the "week-a-day-go-to-work" sort. "Fast colours," they are the thing; something that will wash and wear well; something that will stand the worry of chil-

dren, and the vexations of the kitchen, and the irritations of business. A flimsy, showy garment is sure to get torn,—let us have something that can stand pulling and be always good alike. The great mistake all along has been in separating religion from the heart and life. This has made some people cut themselves off from their fellow-men and become monks and hermits, others wear clothes of coarse stuff and hideous cut and colour; as if ugliness were more godly than beauty, and loneliness better than God's arrangement of men in families. No, no! Religion must be no outside thing at all, except so far as it is the fruit and outgrowth of something possessed in the heart. And as a sunbeam can go nowhere without giving light, and can never become defiled, even should it shine in a sepulchre; so true piety can shine out everywhere and make everything the better for its presence, without being sullied because its possessor has to do with what men call "common things."

I wonder whether some people think a man a better Christian because he has a white hand! I verily believe they do. Religion in a scullery, or in a barrack, or coal-mine, or ship's forecastle! Yes, if it will not

wash and wear in all these places it is good for nought. Listen to the oracles of God: "Whatever ye do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." That must mean, do nothing which you cannot do in that Name. Do every duty of life as unto the Lord. Let your religion fill your heart, and house, and absorb your life. It must lie in the bottom of your scales, it must stand behind the counter, it must rule your advertisements, and guarantee your goods. It will never consent to short weights, unjust dealings, lying puffs, or shoddy. It will rule you, or have nothing to do with you. It cannot abide "eye-service," it is dead against indolence and deception. Don't go anywhere where you cannot take religion with you; don't do anything which religion does not sanction. In business or amusements, at home or abroad, in church or out of it, on Sabbaths or week-days,—"do all to the glory of God." Live your creed, and *be* what you *seem*. Religion will then extend its influence to your words, your demeanour, your temper,—and, sanctifying your whole life, will bless, through you, every one who comes within the sphere of your influence. Do not *be* a vine on Sundays and a thorn-bush in

the week, a fig-tree abroad and a thistle at home. Let the children and the servants feel the power of your piety, whatever they know about your profession. There will be hope for the world when all professors are possessors and confessors of Christianity. "Let every man sweep his own door," and mend the world by mending himself. Old George Herbert has beautifully expressed the true relation of religion to every-day life, when he sings:—

"Teach me, my God and King,
In all things Thee to see,
And what I do in any thing,
To do it as for Thee.

"All may of Thee partake:
Nothing can be so mean,
Which with this tincture (for Thy sake)
Will not grow bright and clean.

"A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine:
Who sweeps a room, as for Thy laws,
Makes that and th' action fine.

"This is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold:
For that which God doth touch and own
Can not for less be told."

III.

ON CONTENTMENT.

A WONDERFUL conjuror this same Contentment. One wave of his wand and a mud-walled cot becomes a palace, and a rough-hewn bench a throne. Without the charm of contentment the cot is a miserable hovel, and the wooden bench wondrous hard, and full of knots and splinters. He sits most comfortably who sits on the cushion of content. If you look at things through the glass of contentment all will wear a rosy hue, while discontent would present them in sombre and unpleasant colours. Contentment converts the pence of the poor man into wealth, while discontent turns the abundance of the rich into penury. The peasant sings over his basin of porridge while the prince growls over his bowl of turtle. For while contentment tunes the voice of melody, discontent *educes* sounds anything but harmonious. It

is astonishing how little a man really *wants;* and if he learn to be satisfied with what he *wants,* how much beside he will have to be thankful for! "Having food and raiment let us be therewith content." We should learn to be content from the consideration that we have much more than we *deserve,* if not all we *desire.*

It is a folly, too, to be discontented with our circumstances when we have no power to alter them. If we grumble till we grow hoarse we shall never transform a dinner of herbs into a stalled ox. But contentment will so season the humble dish that it shall be more enjoyable than the lordly one with strife. And if the poor man satisfy hunger with humble fare, the rich can do no more with all his dainty meals.

Much of our discontent arises from our stubbornly refusing to adapt ourselves to our circumstances. If we won't stoop in going through a low doorway, it is no use grumbling at the beam we knock our head against. If we will wear furs in the dog-days, why fret because we cannot get cool? If we take the path through the fields we must take the stiles; if we take the high road we must e'en take the dust. If we could only learn to

strike the balance and set one thing against another we might be more tranquil and cheerful. There is no condition of life, however undesirable, which has not its compensations. Am I poor?—I have not the cares and responsibilities of the rich. Am I only a servant?—Well, I escape all the vexations and trials masters must meet. And in the time of trouble, the consideration is consoling,—"It might have been worse." I said once to a lame old preacher, "What an affliction that you are so crippled!" "Nay," said he, "if God had not lamed this leg, I know not where the other would have carried me." What I counted a grievous affliction the old man reckoned as God's mercy, instrumental to his salvation. Oh, why should we look at the clouds, when there is bright light beyond, more pleasant to behold? Why prick our hands in constructing chaplets of thorns when we might be making garlands of roses? Imaginary troubles and imaginary wants are far more general than their realities, and often cause more misery. Don't cross a bridge before you come to it, nor meet troubles half-way. Don't discontentedly moan over what you have not, but praise God for what you *have.* There is always good cheer, brave com-

pany, music, and sunshine in the cottage of Content: for a contented mind is a continual feast. Content is an easy spring-carriage which bears one comfortably over the roughest road; discontent is a bare-boned steed without a saddle. Gratitude, Good Temper, and Peace of Mind are the fair children of Content; but evil-eyed Envy, harsh-voiced Anger, carking Care, and haggard Wretchedness are Discontent's unlovely offspring. Discontent is no friend of Piety, but Contentment holds companionship with Faith, Hope, and Charity, and is inseparably associated with true Christianity. And now, as I like a verse for a tailpiece, let us hear Joshua Sylvester, who wrote thus about "A Contented Mind" nearly three hundred years ago:—

"I weigh not Fortune's frown or smile,
  I joy not much in earthly joys;
I seek not state, I reck not style,
  I am not fond of fancy's toys;
I rest so pleas'd with what I have,
  I wish no more, no more I crave.

"I see ambition never pleas'd,
  I see some Tantals starv'd in store;
I see gold's dropsy seldom eas'd,
  I see e'en Midas gape for more.

I neither want, nor yet abound :
  Enough's a feast ; content is crown'd.

" I feign not friendships where I hate,
  I fawn not on the great in show,
I prize, I praise a mean estate,
  Neither too lofty nor too low !
This, this is all my choice, my cheer,
  A mind content, a conscience clear."

IV.

ON DILATORY PEOPLE.

IT would require a vast effort to reach all such, for they dwell everywhere. But there is this consolation that, though I cannot speak to all the tribe of dilly-dalliers, there will be a pretty good proportion of them among those whom my words can reach. Talk of castles in the air, *chateaux-en-Espagne*, and the rest, the fact is there are hosts of people who do worse than live amid aerial nothings,—*they never live at all.* They are always *going to live ;* always going—going, —till they are *gone !* They know no present tense, life is all to-morrows with them.

> "To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
> To the last syllable of recorded time ;
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusty death."

With such, life is one long anticipation and

resolve, till suddenly their career is closed, and no time is left for action and fulfilment.

Much of the unhappiness and ill-success many experience in life is the result of this habit of delay. The languid idler sees the day go by before he has decided how he shall use it. Lets opportunity slip and the advantage pass into other men's hands. Fails to take the tide at the flood, and so

> "All the voyage of his life
> Is bound in shallows, and in miseries."

The active man's life is a history, the procrastinator's an unfulfilled prophecy. The dilatory life is an empty dream, a plan never wrought into solid stone but only looking pretty on paper; it has no pleasures of memory and no confidence of hope. And these people not only injure and distress themselves, but they annoy and trouble others. They are the obstructors of the active and systematic. Their delay causes the break in the machinery, the defeat of plans, and loss and vexation to many. We are so connected and associated in life, that we all suffer or benefit by our relation to others. Every link in the chain feels the *tension* or slackness. Every atom of water

in a pool is displaced by the addition or removal of a single drop. One man keeps another waiting for him, another is hindered by the detention of the second, and a fourth by the delay of the third, and so on through all the connection. A man who keeps others idle by his delay is the waster of their time as well as his own.

Idleness generally consoles itself by great activity of intention, but is idle still. Procrastination s the offspring of Idleness, for Indolence would die of sheer *ennui*, if it did not occupy itself with busy resolves as to what is to be done. But alas! "the street of By-and-bye leads to the house of Never."

Indolence is the rust of genius, the Delilah who denudes Samsons of their strength, the subtle thief who despoils the intellectually wealthy. Poverty treads on the heels of procrastination, and indigence is begotten of Idleness. The true livery of sloth is rags, this is the real motley of fools. How many wear it, and how many deserve to be so arrayed!

Procrastination grows by indulgence. It becomes a moral paralysis, crippling and chaining all the faculties of the man. It is perilous and often fatal to worldly success,

but becomes a crime most flagrant when indulged in, in reference to eternal interests. To lose life's rewards and to neglect its duties is bad enough; but, to lose the soul is infinitely worse.

To suspend the destinies of eternity upon the chance of a to-morrow, to build on a spider's web as if it were adamant, to act as if we had a "prerogative in human hours" is worse than folly, it is madness, it is sin. How well are these thoughts expressed by Young, in his "Night Thoughts" (a book not so much read now as in my younger days):—

"Be wise to-day; 'tis madness to defer;
Next day the fatal precedent will plead;
Thus on, till wisdom is pushed out of life.
Procrastination is the thief of time;
Year after year it steals, till all are fled,
And to the mercies of a moment leaves
The vast concerns of an eternal scene.
If not so frequent, would not this be strange?
That 'tis so frequent, this is stranger still.
Of man's miraculous mistakes, this bears
The palm, 'That all men are about to live,'
For ever on the brink of being born.
All pay themselves the compliment to think
They one day shall not drivel; and their pride
On this reversion takes up ready praise;
At least their own; their future selves applauds;
How excellent that life they ne'er will lead!

Time lodg'd in their own hands is Folly's vails !
That lodg'd in Fate's to wisdom they consign ;
The thing they can't but purpose, they postpone :
'Tis not in folly, not to scorn a fool ;
And scarce in human wisdom to do more.
All promise is poor dilatory man,
And that through ev'ry stage : when young, indeed,
In full content we, sometimes, nobly rest,
Un-anxious for ourselves ; and only wish,
As duteous sons, our fathers were more wise.
At thirty, man suspects himself a fool ;
Knows it at forty, and reforms his plan ;
At fifty chides his infamous delay,
Pushes his prudent purpose to resolve ;
In all the magnanimity of thought
Resolves ; and re-resolves ; then dies the same."

Mayhap the poet's flexile yet faithful pen may thus furnish an application to my little homily which it would be vain indeed for my rough hand to attempt to append. So let me not spoil its effect by saying more.

V.

ON PARENTS AND CHILDREN.

CHILDREN are the treasures of their parents, but like all other treasures they are associated with heavy responsibilities. A childless house is to my thinking not nearly so bright and happy as the house where sounds of ringing childish laughter ripple over the stairs. A nursery is a grand feature in a house. The arms of a little child round a father's neck, the nestling of the babe in the mother's bosom have a wondrous charm and power. But children are not toys; they will not always be children; they are to be men and women of the coming age, and the men and women of the future will be pretty much what their parents make them. You can't love your children too much, while you remember that the love of God gave them to you. But take care that you love them *enough*,—too much to spoil them. Love is

never cruel; but the mother who indulges her child, to the pampering of its passions and the ruin of its happiness, is certainly most unkind. To spoil a child, to let its will be unchecked, its temper ungoverned, its every foolish whim gratified, is to make its childhood miserable and its manhood contemptible. The foolish parent does, most emphatically, *spoil* the child, and while strewing the pathway of her offspring with thorns, gathers and stores a plentiful bundle to be her own uneasy pillow. Sin, in any shape, will sting and slay your child; teach it, at all costs, to hate and avoid it. Don't let it have a serpent to play with, because it cries and says the creature has a pretty skin. It had better cry for disappointment, than cry out under the viper's bite.

I said just now that a nursery was a grand feature in a house. But I don't like children to be lodgers, where they ought to be at home. If the nursery is the penal settlement, the cage and prison to which the children are consigned in order to save the parent trouble, you had better shut it up. Turn it into an aviary or a dove-cote. You can rear birds by deputy, and servants can tend and train them. But don't leave your

children to the hap-hazard care and doubtful example of hirelings, while you stretch yourself on the sofa to read "in peace and quietness," or trot about to visit and gossip with your neighbours. I mean by a nursery the child's own room, which is never so bright as when mother is in it. Cheerful windows, guarded with rails lest little curly heads be thrust too far out, and be followed by struggling heels. The walls, like an open scrap-book, covered with pictures. A bright fire, made inaccessible to little fingers, and kept away from little skirts. Books and toys, and all the treasures and oddments that children accumulate and prize. The brightest spot in all the house, the elfin home and fairy circle, the children's kingdom, where they may shout, and sing, blow tin trumpets, and beat toy drums, to their hearts' content. Where papa, although he be a grave man of business, or a learned divine, or a sedate senator, may be sometimes found on hands and knees with his boys on his back, and tiny hands harnessing and whipping the splendid steed. I confess I should think all the better of an archbishop if I saw him in such guise. The most charming picture of a charming Princess I ever saw, represents her playing pick-a-back with her

child. Oh, it is a good thing for parents to have sympathy with the child-life of their children. You cannot do wrong to make your child feel you are his best and truest friend, that he need have no concealments from you, and that you are never so high and terrible that he need fear to tell his smallest griefs, or confess to you his little follies.

But the children have souls. Immortal beings are entrusted to a parent's care. How great the task, how weighty the care,—"Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Nurse, train, teach them for Jesus. How pure must be the example, how clear and bright the parent's piety, if the child is to be won thereby to love its parent's God! There must be no contradictions between "I say" and "I do." And gentleness and love will always be more potent than strictness and severity. Don't make the Bible a task-book, or degrade it to the office of the birch. Parents who punish their children with the Bible can never expect them to love it. Did ever school-boy love the cane or ferule?

Let Sunday be the gladdest day of all the week, only distinguished from other days by its hallowed joys and heavenly brightness. Strive to bring the children so to love the

Sabbath as to be sorry when it is gone, and so to long for it, as to count the days to its return. Never criticise a preacher in your children's hearing;—they will soon grow captious and self-conceited if you do, and will be so taken up with *hearing* sermons, that they will altogether forget to open the heart to the truth or give it an obedient heeding. My friends will say, What a model parent our homilist must be! Not so; at least he feels no superiority, but is every day conscious of feebleness and failure, and adopts as his prayer, and commends to others, the parental pleading of Charles Wesley:—

"God only wise, almighty, good,
  Send forth Thy truth and light,
To point us out the narrow road,
  And guide our steps aright:
To steer our dangerous course between
  The rocks on either hand;
And fix us in the golden mean,
  And bring our charge to land.
Their selfish will in time subdue,
  And mortify their pride;
And lend their youth a sacred clue
  To find the Crucified.
For this we ask, in faith sincere,
  The wisdom from above,

To touch their hearts with filial fear,
  And pure ingenuous love :
To watch their will, to sense inclined ;
  Withhold their hurtful food ;
And gently bend their tender mind,
  And draw their souls to God."

VI.

HUSBANDS AND WIVES.

IT has been well said that the woman was not taken from the head of man, lest she should rule over him; not from his feet lest he should trample upon her; but from his side, to signify that she is his companion and equal, and that his loving embrace is to cherish her and his strong arm to defend her. "He that findeth a wife findeth a good thing." But, mark you, it must be a "wife!" That good old Saxon word comes from the same root as "weave," showing what a wife is to be. One whose place is home, and whose great work is to fill home with comfort and happiness. While Adam delves, Eve is to spin. When a man makes a prayerful and prudent choice, and findeth a real *wife*, he may count himself "*favou*red of the Lord." He has now "four

eyes for speculation, four hands for operation, four feet for ambulation, and four shoulders for sustentation." Two heads are better than one, especially when the man has a poor one and gets a wife with a better. And two hearts are better than one; sorrow is diminished by sharing it, while joy increases by participation. Let the man that has a wise head, a warm heart, a cunning hand, and a pious soul to wife, prize the gift, and praise the Giver.

"Husbands love your wives," said Saint Paul. The wife must have a place in the heart as well as in the house. "They that choose their love should love their choice." While husbands and wives should never look for perfection in each other, they should ever aim at perfection towards one another. Some men make the mistake of ceasing all attention to their wives after they are wooed and won. And some wives disappoint their husbands by indifference, and an utter disregard of all those tender words and graces by which their husbands were first made their lovers. The "honeymoon" of wedded love should never suffer eclipse, much less extinction. The hymeneal fires should never be permitted to go out. The tree of love

should be planted and flourish, and yield fruitage all the year round.

There will be need of the two bears—Bear and Forbear—in every home. Neither husband nor wife should be a fault-finder. They should be ready to cover rather than to expose each other's failings. They "should provoke one another to love, and love one another notwithstanding provocation."

It has often been noticed how husband and wife grow like each other. The clay that lies beside the ambergris absorbs its fragrance. Everything in a scented cabinet is redolent of the perfume. A tree trained up a crooked stick will be crooked, and water cannot run straight in a serpentine channel. The wife is commonly what the husband makes her; and the woman may say "If the husband is the head, I am the neck," for she may generally turn him whithersoever she will. The true wife will make her partner a "house-band," the true husband will be the stay and bond of the home. A man cannot look for respect where he does not yield it, nor for love where he does not bestow it. There can be no colour nor beauty without light; where the sun *shines* the flowers blow; where the husband

is loving, generous, and good, there it may be expected home will be like a sweet-smelling and blooming garden.

It is a good thing for wife and children when the husband likes to spend evening hours at home. A prettier household picture cannot be drawn than that in which mother is seen sewing with father reading to her, or helping his boy with his school-tasks for to-morrow, or interesting himself in the paper models his child is attempting or the rude ship he is carving. Where the "big ha' Bible" is reverently read, and the morning and evening prayer rise like sweet incense upon the family altar.

In such a home, where love between husband and wife makes the moral atmosphere warm and bright, there will be found love among the children towards each other, and towards their parents. What the children see between father and mother they will surely remember, and most likely imitate. If there be discord between the parents, harmony cannot abide in the home. The jarring string, the rift in the lute, as to the heads of the household, will render the music of love impossible among its members.

St. Peter, a married apostle, prefaces his

directions to husbands and wives each with a "Likewise." There are mutual obligations and correlative duties, and the wife and husband must be, each to other, love, fidelity, and service. Let it not be forgotten that with every exhortation to wives there is also a "Likewise, ye husbands." (1 *Peter* iii. 7.)

"Didst Thou not make us one,
That we might one remain;
Together travel on,
And bear each other's pain;
Till we Thy utmost goodness prove
And rise renew'd in perfect love

"Then let us ever bear
The blessed end in view,
And join, with mutual care
To fight our passage through;
And kindly help each other on,
Till both receive the starry crown."

VII.

WORKERS AND DRONES.

IN the great hive of society there are swarms of idle drones as well as busy bees. And sad it is to say that in this matter the church resembles the world. Not only are there the diligent workers who build the comb and make the honey, but there are plenty who, when they wake up to do anything at all, only feed upon the industry of others, or buzz and sting. The great Master has taught us in parable and precept that every member of His spiritual household must be a worker. He Himself has set the bright example, and He gives "to every man his work." To every one whom He calls He says, "Go work to-day in My vineyard."

It has been stated that only fifteen in every hundred members of Christian churches are engaged in active service for Christ. That

is, there are about six drones to every diligent worker. The idlers have plenty of excuses for their idleness. They have bought a field, they have oxen to prove, they have married a wife. Or, they have no gifts, or nobody ever asked them, or they have not been elected to office in the church. Ah, friend, these pleas may serve to lull your conscience, or may satisfy your fellow-men, but can you dare honestly utter one of them in the face of your Lord, who, asking, "Lovest thou Me," bids you prove your professed love by working in His pastures? "Only fifteen in a hundred at work! Oh, but we have so many teachers, and so many tract-distributors, and so many preachers beside."

Yes, but how many of these devoted labourers combine in themselves the functions of some or all of these officers. As a rule, it is the same people who work in the different branches of service. We want every believer in Christ to ask himself or herself the question, "How much owest *thou* unto thy Lord?"

Especially in cities and towns where there are large masses of humanity, already too numerous for all existing agencies to reach, *and year* by year growing more numerous, it

is imperative that every hand should be put to the work. It is very easy to assume a false humility and speak of our own inability, but there is no one among us who is positively unable to do anything. There were cowards in the ancient armies who cut off their thumbs to disable themselves for service in the field, and their name—*poltroons*—justly attaches to every craven who cripples or conceals his ability to serve, or assumes an incapacity which he does not possess. Each man can do something. At least he can go home to his friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for him, and hath had compassion upon him! He can speak to a wanderer, who will gladly welcome a word of Christian kindliness,—a word, alas, for which, in these Christian days, the wanderer may vainly wait for years! The timid female who trembles to speak a word can deliver a tract. The working-man can do that among his fellows which the parson cannot do. And every effort strengthens purpose and increases power. Use your muscles and you strengthen them. Practice will make easy the most difficult task.

Further, you go not to do your own work, and you go not in your own strength. You

say you are poor and weak, and so you are. Perhaps you would resent being told how miserably poor and weak you really are. You are an untutored shepherd lad in a rustic coat, with a simple sling and a pebble from the brook. Your enemy has shield and armour, sword and spear. But what of that? In the name of the Lord of Hosts you may assail and overthrow a thousand sons of the Anakims. If you have no better weapon than the jaw-bone of an ass, use it, for, before now, heaps upon heaps, yea, a thousand men has such a weapon made to bite the dust. Clay and spittle can restore eyesight if the Saviour so appoint. The blast of rams' horns can shake the city walls if the Lord command. Three hundred men with torches, pitchers, and trumpets can put to flight a hundred and twenty thousand Midianites, if the Lord be with Gideon.

What great results may spring from a small beginning! You touch a tiny spring and a thousand wheels revolve and a thousand levers move. You kindle a spark and a forest is in flames. You displace a stone and a palace falls. You plant a seed and a century of harvests ultimately spring from that *unit germ.*

A lady sees a youth lounging at the corner of Old Street, City Road, and invites him into Whitfield's Tabernacle. That night he is converted, and Williams, afterwards the martyr of Erromanga, is enlisted for Christ. Smith, who died for his Master in Demerara, was similarly invited to enter a chapel in the Euston Road, and so brought to Jesus. A pedlar leaves a tract at a Shropshire farm-house: it rouses to serious concern one Richard Baxter. Baxter writes the "Saint's Everlasting Rest," and it is the instrument of Philip Doddridge's conversion. William Wilberforce reads Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul" and seeks to be a Christian. And by Wilberforce's "Practical View of Christianity" Thomas Chalmers is won for God. Thus a golden chain is constructed through the centuries, the end of which is not yet seen, whose first link was fashioned by the hawker's solitary tract.

One of the most cheering encouragements to Christian Work is its reproductiveness. You lead one to the Saviour, and in leading that one you may be really leading a host and enlisting them under the Royal banner. No arithmetical progression can mark out the

growing results of individual effort for Christ. Eleven men stood on the shore of the sea of Tiberias and received the commission to go into all the world. Unto what has that handful grown? John and Charles Wesley gave themselves to God and His work, and now there are in the world three millions and a half members of Methodist churches, or nearly fourteen millions of adherents to Methodist doctrine and discipline.

We shall inevitably lose strength and comfort unless we work for God. Self-denial, cross-bearing, following Christ, these are essentials of Christianity. A drone in the Christian hive is an anomaly. In proportion as we approach the character of the drone we depart from the character of Christ. We must not selfishly eat the honey without contributing the results of our labour to the common stock. We must do good, as well as get good; and in doing good we shall always get good.

A modern American poet, Carlos Wilcox, shall furnish the poetic application to this blunt homily.

"'Tis when the rose is wrapp'd in many a fold,
Close to its heart, the worm is wasting there
Its life and beauty; not when, all unroll'd,

Leaf after leaf, its bosom, rich and fair,
Breathes freely its perfumes throughout the ambient air.

"Beware lest thou, from sloth that would appear
But lowliness of mind, with joy proclaim
Thy want of worth; a charge thou could'st not hear
From other lips without a blush of shame,
Or pride indignant; then be thine the blame,
And make thyself of worth, and thus enlist
The smiles of all the good, the dear to fame;
'Tis infamy to die and not be missed,
Or let all soon forget that thou did'st e'er exist.

"Rouse to some work of high and holy love,
And thou an angel's happiness shalt know,—
Shalt bless the earth while in the world above;
The good begun by thee shall onward flow
In many a branching stream, and wider grow!
The seed that, in these few and fleeting hours,
Thy hands unsparing and unwearied sow,
Shall deck thy grave with amaranthine flowers,
And yield thee fruits divine in heaven's immortal bowers."

VIII.

OUTSIDE AND INSIDE.

THERE'S a very great difference between the outside and inside of a thing. Mrs. Showy's house has a fine stucco front, a green door, and a brass knocker. A rose tree climbing beside the window gives the place a pleasant aspect, and as you pass by you might imagine it the abode of purity and grace. But if you make use of the knocker the door will probably be opened a little way and a very dirty face protruded. You will remain gazing into the very dirty passage while a child runs into the kitchen and bawls, "Mother, here's a man wants you!" After a tedious lapse of time Mrs. S. will appear with her hair in graceless disorder, her dress torn and unfastened, her shoes down at the heel,—the laces dragging on the floor behind,—and her face dirty, and *not at* all improved by an attempt to wipe it

with a very greasy apron. You wait while a chair is cleared for you, gazing meanwhile at the ashes in the unpolished grate; state your business as well as you can while the children scream and quarrel at the back, and then take up your hat to find the crown disfigured by its having stood in the place where a beery jug had been deposited. On this you take your leave, in the vexation of your spirit saying, "Who would have thought it?" To see Mrs. Showy "with her things on," who would know her in her own home? What a difference between the outside and the inside!

Some people are like the shows at country fairs. It is well known that the gaudy paintings outside are far more wonderful than the reality exhibited within. The giant on canvas is at least eight feet high and has a noble face and a commanding appearance. The giant inside is considerably shorter, has a puffed, expressionless face, and is very shaky about the knees. So, with many people, you see a great deal more outside than you could see within. All the stock is in the shop window; you must not expect a large store behind.

To see young Mr. Shoddy with his hat and

cane, his coat of fashionable cut, his Albert chain and appendages, you might think him a most intelligent young man. How grievously you will be disappointed if you converse with him! The fact is you cannot converse with him at all, except you are prepared to discuss the merits of meerschaums or the flavour of cigars. He hasn't a thought beyond them and the "London Penny Reader."

English History is as unknown to him as the writings of Herodotus. The simplest facts of Natural Science are to him as Greek. But he knows how to tie a cravat fashionably, —he can play quoits too, and is great at cricket. Ask him to sit down and write you an intelligent letter and he will be incapable.

Miss Julia Simper is as deceptive, if you judge by the outward appearance. In style of dress she is, or would be, quite the lady. But no sooner does she open her mouth than she "puts her foot in it," as Dame Partington would say. The way in which she drops her H's, multiplies negatives, puts singular verbs after plural nominatives, and plays other freaks with the Queen's English is perfectly distressing. She reads too,—every number *of the Penny* Miscellany; but never read a

book of standard History or Biography in her life. She can do tatting, and crochet, and embroidery, and wool-work, but can no more darn stockings than she can work a problem in mathematics.

With these people and the class they represent, both among the old and young, it is all stucco and veneer, lath and plaster, canvas and coloured fire. It is all outside,—a goodly seeming show, and nothing more. We want solidity and reality in these days. More common sense and less affectation, more work and less self-indulgence.

But in religion, for the inside to belie the outside is detestable. This is the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. A fair marble tomb is only the casket of corruption. A golden cup may contain poison. A jewel-hilted dagger will stab. The bloom on the peach avails nothing if the fruit be rotten at the core. If you cut through mahogany you will find it the same colour all the way through. If you cut through the stained imitation you find the rich colour is only surface-deep. "True to the core" should be the motto and description of the Christian. No Sunday veneering or out-of-doors lacquer, but the same pure, true, loving charac-

ter on every day of the week and in every place. "What *is*, outshines what *seems*." When every Christian professor is altogether *inside* what he is *outside*, or, better still, is more than what he seems, it will be a bright day for the church and the world. Meanwhile, let us remember, that if some base metal be mingled with the sterling coin of the kingdom, the value of the real is not depreciated by the worthlessness of the false. Gold is gold, though all the world should deal in brass and spelter.

"Be what thou seemest; live thy creed;
Hold up to earth the torch Divine;
Be what thou prayest to be made;
Let the great Master's steps be thine.

"Sow truth if thou the truth would'st reap;
Who sows the false shall reap in vain;
Erect and sound thy conscience keep;
From hollow words and deeds refrain.

"Sow love, and taste a fruitage pure,
Sow peace, and reap a harvest bright;
Sow sunbeams on the rock and moor,
And find a harvest-home of light."

IX.

AN UNRULY MEMBER.

SUCH is the Scriptural description of the tongue. So small yet so powerful, so insignificant yet so rebellious. "A world of evil,"—when only under the guidance of the depraved heart and carnal passions. And yet an instrument of great good, and chosen above all others by God, in "the foolishness of preaching," for the instruction and salvation of men.

But sad and strange are the performances of which this restless and uncontrollable member is capable. As the spark sets the forest in a blaze, and the small helm sways the huge ship, so can the tongue produce immense results and compass large ends.

Old Thomas Adams, who wrote in the seventeenth century, ingeniously describes the fashioning of this tiny yet terrible organ:

"To create so little a piece of flesh, and to

put such vigour into it; to give it neither bones nor nerves, yet to make it stronger than arms and legs, and those most able and serviceable parts of the body.

"Because it is so forcible, therefore hath the most wise God ordained that it shall be but little; that it shall be but one. That so the parvity and singularity may abate the vigour of it. If it were paired, as the arms, legs, hands, feet, it would be more unruly. For he that cannot tame one tongue, how would he be troubled with twain!

"Because it is so unruly, the Lord hath hedged it in, as a man will not trust a wild horse in an open pasture, but prison him in a close pound. A double fence hath the Creator given to confine it,—the lips and the teeth,—that through these bounds it might not break."

The man whose life is sorely vexed by the cantankerous tongue of his scolding wife would certainly breathe a sigh of sympathy as he read the deliverance of Puritan Adams on the "singularity" of the tongue, and plaintively echo the exclamation,—"How would he be troubled with twain!"

Perhaps the worst use to which the tongue *can* be put is the circulation of slander. The

tale-bearer and the back-biter are held up to shame and contempt in the Word of God, and have been universally branded with disgrace by men. The rolling stone may gather no moss, but rolling scandal will gather blackness and bitterness, even as the revolving snowball increases in size. Many a reputation has been wounded by a dagger wielded in the dark. For the tongue of the back-biter is the weapon of a coward and assassin, who stabs in the back and hides himself under the cloak of night. "Of the dead say nothing but good" says the proverb, and it is as well to say nothing but good of the living when they are absent. Nor should aught else be said at any time, except when the interests of truth and justice demand it.

Why should I, who have faults enough of my own, and should be very sorry for everybody to know me as I know myself, take an evil delight in discovering and displaying the faults of others? The evil-speaker is like the gnat who settles on the wound and stings the galled horse. Like the butterfly I would prefer the rosebush to the dunghill, the cup of the lily to the corrupt carcase. Why should the lark croak like the raven when it can sing so well? Why should the nightingale scream

like the owl when it can warble in notes of liquid sweetness? Don't croak, when you are able to carol; don't be an owl while you can sing like a nightingale.

The Christian principle is honest, brave, and *manly*, in the best sense of that good but ill-used word. Let the injured person tell the wrong-doer his fault to his face, *alone*. How many misunderstandings, heart-burnings, and miseries would have been prevented, if that had been the rule of human conduct! It is not too much to say that thousands of lives would have been saved, and torrents of blood stayed. One tongue may kindle a war which ten thousand hands cannot extinguish.

Some tongues are so elastic and well-lubricated that once set agoing they know not when to stop. Now a clock that chimes the hours, and even the quarters, can be tolerated,—but a clock that strikes instead of ticking cannot be borne. Save us from the clocks whose pendulums are bell-hammers!

These elongated and ever-running tongues are very much in the habit of extending their utterances beyond the limit of the truth, and of running beyond the bounds of soberness.

Have you never heard them say that "hun-

dreds" went away unable to get into the place of assembly, when they should have said scores? "Half a town burnt down," when it was a shed and two pig-styes? "Three new bonnets on so-and-so's head in a month," when it was only the same bonnet, dyed or re-trimmed? Somebody should publish for us a Dictionary giving the true meaning of the expressions used by these persons, and reducing the words in the vocabulary of extravagance to synonyms of soberness; we should then have such explanations as these:—

Thousand,—any number over thirteen.

Black,—not quite white.

Killed,—scratched, or fainting.

Frightened-to-death,—slightly alarmed.

Awfully, *fearfully*, *dreadfully*,—Adverbs of Degree. (N.B. Of the *least* degree.)

With such aid as this we could translate the unknown tongue into simple speech, and those who have been much alarmed or afflicted by the unguarded eloquence of extravagant tongues would be considerably relieved by turning to the "Dictionary of Exaggeration."

Another evil is that of idle, frivolous, and flippant speech. How many tongues run all

X.

USE AND ORNAMENT.

HOW much more valuable the useful than the merely ornamental! A saw and a hammer were more valuable to Robinson Crusoe than a heap of jewels or bags of gold. It is better to be a spade than a spangle. The gingerbread is more valuable than the gilding, and food is as savoury to a hungry man eaten from a wooden platter as from a golden salver.

Some people like feathers and finery better than fur and flannel, but I know which is the warmer. Rings and walking-canes are very poor shoe-leather, and a brilliant scarf-pin is no stay to the stomach.

The winter wind whistles through silk though it be the colour of the rainbow, but serge is warm though it be russet. Give me the useful,—you may keep the fine. I had rather ride on an ass that carries me, than a

horse that throws me. A crooked log makes a straight fire. The smith and his money are black, but both are honest.

The idle gentleman serves the diligent workman in the country where work is wealth and industry is capital. Some men might be called "chimney ornaments," for they are no use anywhere but at the fireside. They remind one of the bright polished pokers that housewives are fond of keeping lying-in-state in the drawing-room fender; which require a little tough strong fellow, that doesn't mind getting soiled, to wait on them,—and are useful for nothing themselves, and not much to look at either.

So it is with some females. All "frontispiece," but no "contents;" all "binding" but no "book." As much use to a working-man for a wife as a silver butter-knife to a hungry fellow when he wants to dissect a beef-steak. Like a cheap French clock under a glass shade,—all gilt, but no go.

The great thing is to be of use in the world, and then one is sure to be an ornament to the world. For it is well to remember the most useful thing is truly beautiful, and a steam-engine is as beautiful as a diamond necklace, and a watch as a jewelled coronet.

Where there are many to eat, a good cook can be less easily dispensed with than a dancing-master.

Some lads at school learn to draw landscapes and to talk bad French, while they couldn't sketch a map of their own country or write a letter in English correctly. As for the girls, many of them can do tatting and tambour work, but neither make a shirt nor mend a stocking. What is the use of modelling-in-wax to the wife who can't make a pudding? Fireworks look brilliant but they won't boil a pot. That is gold which is worth gold, and not all that glitters.

Never be ashamed of being useful. Better wear fustian that is paid for than broadcloth on credit. A horny hand and a toil-stained face are no disfigurement. There is nothing to be ashamed of in labour, and it is a proud horse that will not carry his own provender. The apothecary's mortar may spoil the luter's music, but the plectrum pounds no medicine.

"Handsome is who handsome does," and diligence and charity are always beautiful. The Queen was not more lovely in her coronation robes than when beside the dying cottager's bedside. The tender hand *and beaming* eye and gentle service in the

hospital are more admirable than the elegance displayed in the ballroom. Some persons are like the Corinthian pillars that adorn the portico but do not strengthen the building. The dull old stone that lies deep down out of sight is the real foundation of the fabric.

In the churches and congregations we see many persons who are amiable and admirable but altogether useless. For themselves they take care, but for others seldom or never. But here indolence is culpable, and selfishness a crime. Here is a verse which may help to stimulate such to become truly ornamental by becoming useful :—

"He that is weary let him sit.
My soul would stir
And tread in courtesies and wit,
Quitting the fur
To cold complexion needing it.

"Man is no star, but a quick coal
Of mortal fire :
Who blows it not, nor doth control
A faint desire,
Lets his own ashes choke his soul.

"Oh that I were an orange tree—
That busy plant !

Then should I ever laden be,
And never want
Some fruit for Him that dressed me.

"But we are still too young or old ;
The man is gone
Before we do our wares unfold :
So we freeze on,
Until the grave increase our cold."

XI.

ON GIVING.

IF all getters were givers the poor would never pine, nor the ignorant perish for lack of knowledge. But it requires a greater effort to open the hand than to close it, and some persons have been close-fisted so long that the joints have grown into chronic stiffness.

Yet all these people believe in giving,—*so that they are the receivers.* They are content to receive gifts temporal or spiritual, very content, so long as you say nothing about acknowledgment or return. They like a comfortable sanctuary and a cosy pew, but think it should be provided for nothing. The announcement some popularizing folks like to parade they particularly admire: "No seat-rents and no collections." They never do more to the collection plate than shake their head,—and there is not much

in that. They hoard up three-penny pieces because they are too proud when they must give to give copper; and delude themselves with the idea that they have been liberal, when they have only been paying a tax upon their own pride. If there were silver pennies they would never give more valuable coin. One of this class dropped half-a-crown into the plate in mistake for a penny, but muttered "Ah, well, I shall get credit for it in heaven." "No, you won't," replied the shrewd collector, who overheard the remark, "you will only get credit for the penny you meant to give."

It is well known that even in large and respectable congregations there are many who never give at all. In fact, deacons, wardens, and stewards well understand that it is the same people who may be depended upon to give. Young men that spend a couple of shillings a week on tobacco can't spare a penny for the cause of God. Young women with earrings and brooches and dazzling attire frown at the collection plate. People come to School Anniversaries and pretend much sympathy and applaud the children's singing, but let the teachers slave *all the year* round and pay all the expenses

of the school into the bargain. Clap the eloquent periods, or wipe their eyes at the pathetic passages of the missionary speech, and then search their pockets for the smallest possible coin for the collection. Sit under the ministry of the man who is wearing out body and brain and exhausting his soul in their service, and never give at quarterly collections or think of the Ministers' Widows' and Orphans' fund. I can't help speaking plainly about such people, their meanness rouses my indignation. And then to hear them garble Scripture to excuse their own niggardliness!—everlastingly quoting "She hath done what she could,"—as if that meant, She has done the least that she could, whereas it means, She has done her utmost. *They* needn't trouble themselves. After their present style they need never fear that that text will have a personal application. And then those "two mites!" How often people give their "mite" and think they give as much as the widow. Deluded mortals! She cast in "all her living," and they "of their abundance" cast in *little.* There is no application or agreement between the two cases.

What is needed is *liberal devising* and *systematic giving.* It would be well for all Chris-

tians to keep account of what they give, that they might surprise themselves by seeing how small is the annual amount. The Jews gave a tithe, shall we of the better dispensation do less? Let every man do as God hath prospered him. "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."

If every week a portion were put away for God there would always be something in store for His cause and His poor. Three millions of money raised yearly in England for works of piety and charity,—more than *one hundred millions* spent on intoxicating drink. And what is the case with us personally? Is there not as great a disparity between the expenditure on our individual luxuries and indulgences, and the amount given to God? And even this comparison is incorrect. For no giving rises to the standard of sacrifice, unless there be the self-denial or the surrender of something whose loss is felt. The balance should be struck between all that we expend on ourselves and all we give to the Lord, all that we receive, and all that we consecrate to

His service, all that we owe unto God and all that we pay. It is as much a part of Christianity to give as to pray. Offerings are a necessary part of worship, as much as melodious praises. God is always giving; giving in the sunshine, giving in the showers, giving in the fruitful seasons. His Providence is lavish and generous. And above all "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." "How much owest thou unto thy Lord?"

"Is thy cruse of comfort wasting?
  Rise and share it with another;
And through all the years of famine
  It shall serve thee and thy brother.
Love divine shall fill thy storehouse,
  Or the handful still renew:
Scanty fare for *one* will often
  Make a royal feast for *two*.

"For the heart grows rich in giving;
  All its wealth is golden grain:
Seeds that mildew in the garner,
  Scattered, fill with gold the plain.
Is thy burden hard and heavy?
  Do thy steps drag wearily?
Help to bear another's burden,—
  God shall bear both it and thee.

"Numb and weary on the mountain,
  Would'st thou sleep amidst the snow?

Chafe that frozen form beside thee,
  And together both shall glow.
Art thou stricken in life's battle?
  Many wounded round thee moan;
Lavish on their wounds thy balsam,
  And that balm shall heal thine own.

"Is thine heart a well left empty?
  Only God the void can fill,—
Nothing but a ceaseless Fountain
  Can its ceaseless longings still:
Give thine heart a living power,—
  Self-entwined its strength sinks low:
It can only live in loving,
  And by serving love will grow."

XII.

THINGS THAT PUZZLE ME.

I NEVER expect to understand everything, any more than I expect to put the ocean into a tea-spoon, or to weight the Himalaya Mountains in a letter-balance.

But I refer not so much now to that which is vast and mysterious, as to that which I see every day and have been familiar with from my childhood. There are people and practices, acts and opinions that perplex me. They are like the sums used to be when I began compound addition, they won't "add up," nor "come right." There are persons who, like the rule of three, do "puzzle me," and whose "practice," if it does not "make me mad" (as the schoolboy rhyme runs) is sorely perplexing.

For instance, there are my neighbours Trundle and Dargent. Trundle is a hard-working man, with six small children and

a weekly wage of thirty shillings. "From early morn till dewy eve" does Trundle have to toil, and must be sadly wearied sometimes when he gets home to his tea. Yet,—a cheerful, active Christian,—Trundle is always at work for the church and the Master. Nearly all his evenings are occupied, and on Sundays he spends his mornings and afternoons in the Sabbath School, and yet manages to be present at both services and an early prayer-meeting into the bargain.

Now my other neighbour, Dargent, who lives in the large house on the hill, is a wealthy merchant. He, too, is a Christian man, and a member of the church. I see him ride down to business between nine and ten in the morning, and he generally returns to dinner by four. Once or twice in the year he and his family go off for weeks together to the sea-side or some other pleasant and healthful resort. Now, that is a luxury which Trundle's family have never tasted for a single day. Dargent, too, has servants, horses, and a carriage; whereas I believe Trundle doesn't possess even a perambulator, and certainly has to polish his own boots. Yet I never see Dargent at a prayer-meeting. He is not a Sabbath

School teacher, nor a tract distributor, nor a preacher, nor a sick visitor. In fact, he holds no office and does no work in the church. He does not always get to the sanctuary twice on the Sunday, and I never knew him to be there at the week-night service.

Now this puzzles me. Is Dargent's religion the same thing as Trundle's? Does Dargent love, honour, and serve the same Master? If Dargent's inactivity is true piety, surely Trundle's laboriousness is a "work of supererogation." But, then, *somebody* must teach the children, and visit the sufferers, and do the work! Oh, but perhaps when a man gets rich he is exonerated from actual service? Yet that would mean that the men who are heaviest pressed with life's burdens are also to bear all the burdens of the church! I wish Dargent would explain his position to me, for the contrast between him and Trundle is one of the *things that puzzle me.*

Then I know Trundle never had much schooling, and Dargent has been to college. So that Dargent ought to be the teacher, if education is any qualification. But the rich and cultivated men stay at home, or stroll through their conservatories, while the

humble, plodding Trundles do their best. I suppose, then, the more gifts and talents a man has, the less responsibility rests upon him for their use? But doesn't it say, "To whom much is given of the same much shall be required"? Now this is one of the *things that puzzle me.*

But I haven't done with all my perplexities as to Trundle and Dargent yet. Whenever there's a collection I know that Trundle gives sixpence, and on special occasions he gives more. Polly and Johnny Trundle, too, and all the little Trundles who may be present, put something in the plate. I am sure that Trundle's gifts to the cause of God and charity do not average less than half-a-crown a week, take the year round. That is one twelfth of his whole income.

But Dargent will content himself with giving half-a-crown where Trundle gives a shilling. Yet Dargent's income is *not* thirty shillings, but *twice thirty pounds* a week! So that if it be right for Trundle to give a shilling to the collection, his wealthy brother, to be equal with him, ought to give two sovereigns; and to come up to the average of *only one twelfth* devoted by John Trundle, *Squire* Dargent's gifts should be never less

than £250 a year! But there is no proportion between an income of thirty shillings a week, and one of sixty pounds. For when Trundle's half-crown is set aside he has only fifty-five *sixpences* for all the wants of his family; whereas the Squire, having given his twelfth, would have fifty-five *sovereigns!* Now that is another of the things *which puzzle me.*

Yet Squire Dargent is considered a liberal man. He sometimes gives what appear large sums, but which, in their proportion to his means, are nothing equal to the noble gifts of my modest friend John Trundle. Yet I never hear anybody say, "What a handsome gift of Trundle's!"—even when he has done twice as much as the Squire. Besides, Mr. Dargent never feels the miss of what he gives. If he gave half his income away, he would still have as many pounds a week as Trundle has shillings, all told. So that the Squire will have to increase his givings largely before he feels the pinch which his humble Christian brother feels. But mustn't one feel pinched before one reaches the level of self-denial and sacrifice? And are gifts that cost nothing acceptable to the Saviour? And, if gifts that are not the offering of love and the purchase of self-denial are not up to

the Christian standard, then the Squire has given *nothing*. For nothing can be said to be given to Christ which He does not accept. And did not two mites cast into the Master's balances outweigh *all* the gifts spared from the "abundance" of *all* the rich worshippers who entered the temple?

How does the Squire understand that Scripture? I wish he would justify his action as to Christian giving, for it is one of the *things which puzzle me.*

I will tell you another thing that puzzles me. It is that Christian people are so easily upset by *little things.* Mr. Short left the Sunday School because the Superintendent filled his place one morning when he was behind time. Miss Quick left the church because the minister (Poor man! he was in a brown study,) passed her in the street without bowing or speaking. Mrs. White will have nothing to do with the bazaar, because she was not asked before Mrs. Black.

Do these good people ever think, as they allow their minds to be so easily moved, of the Master? Deserting the work, or standing aloof from it, do they ever remember that the work is *Christ's?* To Him the account *must be* rendered, from Him the award

received. The work is too dignified, too important to be subordinated to prejudice, petty jealousy, or paltry pride. "Master, Thou hast said 'Feed my lambs,' but I wrapped my talent in a napkin, and buried it in the earth, because my brother or my sister said—" Ah, who will dare frame such excuse or approach the Master with such pitiful plea?

Friends, in the work of God we have to do with *souls, immortal souls!* Deathless spirits, for a while tabernacling among us in earthly clay. The tent may be rent to-morrow and the tenant fled. It is Time with them and us to-day, it may be Eternity with either of us to-morrow. The work is too pressing, the risk too great, the results too tremendous, to allow of delay or indolence or jealousy on the part of the workers. When ships are sinking or houses burning, men quit their quarrels, hush their bickerings, and forget even ancient feuds. When Christians allow passion or prejudice, pride or selfishness, to separate them from their brethren and the work, while it distresses and grieves, *it also puzzles me.*

I have not got to the end of all my perplexities,—not by a long way. It puzzles me that men who are professed Christians, who

believe and reverence the Bible, and recognize the Divine authority of the Sabbath, can, by the score, vote against closing public-houses on the Lord's day. It puzzles me that Christian people, seeing the injury the public-house does, the extent to which the Saviour's name is dishonoured thereby, the opposition presented by the open liquor-shop on the Sabbath to the work of the School and the church, can remain quiescent and allow the iniquity to continue, while they would rise in indignation against the opening of drapers' shops on the Sunday.

It puzzles me that a Christian woman should pierce her ears and wear unnatural and unbecoming ornaments dangling therefrom, when the sale of the jewels would keep a child in an orphanage for a year, and leave her the more beautiful.

It puzzles me that a Christian man should spend as much in cigars in a week as would educate and clothe a fatherless bairn.

It puzzles me that people who sing that the "whole realm of nature" would be "a present far too small" as a return for "love amazing and divine" should hoard up threepenny bits for collections.

It puzzles me that any follower of Christ

should allow ignorance, or prejudice, or appetite to render him insensible to the claims of the great Temperance Reformation.

It puzzles me that persons whose relatives have been degraded and slain by drink should sneer at and decry teetotalism.

It puzzles me that landowners will allow peasants to live in hovels, in comparison with which their very dog-kennels and stables are sumptuous palaces. It puzzles me that employers of labour should grind the faces of the poor, and make gold out of the labours of little children who ought to be at school or at play.

But I will not distract you further with my perplexities.

If all the instruments in an orchestra are not tuned to one key there will be hideous discord. So these inconsistencies that puzzle me are the result of a want of harmony between men's professions and practice, or between their practice and the Divine Word which they avow to be the rule of life and duty. If the parts of a machine are not made to fit precisely when brought together, there will be friction and fracture, clamour and danger. A man cannot walk properly with one leg longer than the other. So if a man's

profession and life disagree, there will be halting and stumbling, and an ungraceful gait.

Consistency is the great lack of too many Christians. They are Christians, but not *always* and *altogether* Christians. The Gospel has power to subdue the world, but it must subjugate and rule the church first. A little of the world can enfeeble and paralyze Christianity, but a little Christianity will never overcome the world.

Oh! for whole-souled devotion, thorough piety, unwavering constancy, inflexible consistency! Let the church become really, wholly Christian and the world will soon be Christian too.

"The daylight wanes and dies—'why stand ye idle?'
Life hasteth to its bourne.
The bridegroom tarries—will ye greet the bridal,
Or in the darkness mourn?

"Lo! in the fields the yellow harvest drooping,
As lilies in the rain;
Where are the reapers, that they come not, trooping,
To gather in the grain?

"Some, in the festive hall disporting gaily,
On slothful pillow, some;
Some, in delays most blameful, and yet daily
Exclaiming, 'Lo, I come.'

"And some, infatuate, 'mid the aliens' scoffing,
Quarrel about their toil ;—
As wreckers, when ships founder in the offing,
Grow murderous over spoil.

"Meanwhile, the harvest waiteth for the reaping,
God's patience hath not tired.
Ye cannot say, extenuate of your sleeping—
'We wait, for none hath hired.'

"Through the hushed noon-tide hour the Master calleth,
Ye cannot choose but hear ;
Still sounding when the lengthening shadow falleth,
'Why stand ye idle here ?'

"Up ! for awhile the pitying glory lingers !
Work while it yet is day ;
Then rest the Sabbath rest—where angel-singers
Make melody for aye."